

THE PHILADELPHIA ORDINARIATE POST

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
AND THE BLESSED JOHN HENRY NEWMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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Advent FERIA

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Actually, this is an extra number of *POP*. There are a few important developments to share, even before the January edition.

First, we have a new name (approved by our Bishop-elect and Apostolic Administrator) for the merged congregation of Blessed John Henry Newman and St Michael's: St John the Baptist. While he was not on our initial list of possible patrons, his name emerged at the end as a saint who is well-suited to our age. He is, as St Luke reminds us, an evangelist, spreading the good news of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. He consistently bears witness to Christ: in his preaching, and even in the womb (when Mary visits his mother Elizabeth). He is willing to send his disciples away to follow Jesus, the Lamb of God. He has the humility to let go of his disciples in favor of Jesus. And the humility to accede to Jesus' request to baptize Him. He has the courage of his convictions, and is willing to be counter-cultural. This leads him to rebuke Herod, which in turn leads to his imprisonment and death. He is our Lord's forerunner in death as well as birth.

We will do well to imitate his virtues, as evangelists, as witnesses to Jesus, with the courage to stand against the powers that be when they are evil. John shows us how to introduce others to Christ. It is his humility which lets him call attention to Christ and not to himself (a key to effective evangelism). It is also this humility which gives his preaching such power and credibility: it makes it clear that he is not doing it for his own glory (another key). In order to imitate him, we will need to heed his preaching of repentance, conversion of life, and thus prepare ourselves to receive Him whom we wish to proclaim to others by our practice of penitence and conversion of life.

As a patron, the Baptist also has the practical advantages of having good name recognition, unlike some of the British saints we thought about, who would be exemplary patrons but require explanation all the time. He is exceptional in that he has two convenient feast days: his Nativity (June 24th) and his Beheading (August 29th). He is also prominent during Advent and at the Baptism of Our Lord after Epiphany.

We will retain Blessed John Henry Newman and St Michael as secondary patrons, as well as St James the Less, and observe their feasts with appropriate solemnity. Good Shepherd Sunday will also have special significance for us each year in Paschaltide. We have been blessed by our patrons' prayers and aid, and will not want to leave them behind even as we move ahead.

I want to thank all who suggested names for the merged parish. There were many good suggestions, which for one reason or another wouldn't work (potential confusion from another parish of the same name nearby, our not wanting to duplicate another community in the Ordinariate, etc.), and many which would have worked well. One person suggested Our Lady of Walsingham. I commented that since our Cathedral is of Our Lady of Walsingham, this didn't seem quite appropriate. The response came back: what about Our Lady of Walsingham the Less?

While some in Newman suggested we keep St Michael, I felt it important to take a new patron for the newly merged congregation. What we have now is neither St Michael's nor Newman, but something new. I dare to hope that the combination will be even greater than the sum of the parts. We will need to be thinking of ourselves as something new, and having a new name as well as a new (and permanent!) home will help in that. Both Newman and St Michael's went through something similar when we left Good Shepherd and St James the Less. Those transitions, however, were less significant than this one: at that time, location changed but not the actual congregation, which is the people. In that sense, this is a greater change, as we now form a new community of the faithful.

Some Practical Matters

The big practical change is the move to Bridgeport: change of time and place. I trust you don't need the reminder: Sunday Mass is now at 10, at the former Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 502 Ford Street in Bridgeport. We expect this to be our permanent home.

I remind you that tomorrow (Saturday, December 19th) there is a work day at our new home. This will give us the opportunity to get the church, coffee hour room and kitchen in shape for our first Sunday the next day. We start at 9. Please come!

Beginning January 1st, we will consolidate the finances of Newman and St Michael's. Please make all checks payable to St Michael's. This will change again later when we have effected the change of name on the bank accounts (which, in turn, depends on changing the name of the corporation). I expect this to be done sometime early in the new year. Regular contributors will receive offering envelopes before then end of 2015 (DV) for use in 2016. Using these makes it easier for the counters to keep track of contributions, so I encourage you to use them for the weekly collection. To recap: between now and the end of the year, make your contributions as you have been. Your tax letter will come from Newman or St Michael's (or both). Beginning with the new year, make all contributions to St Michael's. All Building Fund donations should be made to St Michael's, and marked "Building Fund."

Early in the new year we will also be effecting the corporate merger of the two congregations for legal purposes. The Newman charitable trust will be dissolved, and its assets transferred to St Michael's. Then the lawyers will figure out how St Michael's (with Newman) becomes St John the Baptist. Canonically, things are easier, since Newman was originally set up in the Ordinariate as a mission of St Michael's.

Remember that the Christmas services will be in Bridgeport:

Christmas Eve

Mass with Carols, 5 p.m.

Carols, 10 p.m.

Sung Mass (with choir), 10:30 p.m.

Christmas Day

Mass with Carols, 10 a.m.

Confessions, Christmas Eve, 4:30 & 9-9:45 p.m.

As you will see when we get to Bridgeport, the choir will be singing from the back of the church, in the space in front of the confessional. This is a temporary arrangement, along with the temporary organ in the back of the nave. Eventually, the choir will be in the gallery, but this will require some work on the organ in the loft. This affects confessions. The choir normally warms up before the service. When confession times coincide with choir warm-up, as they do on Sunday before Mass, I will hear confessions not in the confessional, but in the lower church. Stairs on in the back of the church one either side.

If you need directions or transportation help in getting to Bridgeport, please let me know. It will be further for many St Michael's people (and some Newman), and we don't want to lose anyone for lack of transportation. Until the rectory moves (March?), weekday Masses, youth group, and Bible study will continue in Mount Airy; all Sunday (and Christmas) Masses in Bridgeport. More on that as we go forward.

This is all very exciting. I hope you find it so. I certainly do. I wish you every blessing for the remainder of Advent, and for all of our Christmas celebration of Christ's Birth. I remain

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley